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ABSTRACT

This newsletter of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)contains a collection of articles which discuss various aspects of early literacy. Articles in the newsletter are: "Introduction: Reading Instruction, a Key to the Future"; "Ensuring Early Literacy through Coherent Instruction" (Leslie Blair); "Reading across the Region" (Leslie Blair)--the "region" consists of the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas; "New Mexico State University Is up to the Challenge" (Pamela Porter); "Cooperative Education--The Key to Bilingual Success?" (Pamela Porter); "The Reading Success Network: Linking Teachers, Building Community" (Jill Slack); and "Resources for Improving Children's Ability To Read" (compiled by the SEDL Office of Institutional Communication and Policy Services). (NKA)

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Unlocking the Future: Early Literacy

SEDLetter

Vol. 11 No. 1 Mar 1999

Leslie Asher Blair, Editor

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Southwest Educational Development Laboratory News

SEDLETTER

Volume XI Number I March 1999

Unlocking the Future: Early Literacy

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Wesley A. Hoover, Ph.D.
President and CEO

Joyce S. Pollard, Ed.D.
Director, OICPS

Leslie Asher Blair, M.A.
Editor

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Introduction
Reading Instruction: A Key to The Future

Nearly a year ago, publication of the National Research Council report, Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children, brought a focus to, and turned the spotlight on, many of the federal, state, and local efforts to ensure that children develop early literacy.

"It supports phonics and whole language," said some readers of the report. "This ends the 'reading wars'," declared others.

But what if there were no war? No territories drawn between phonics and whole language? Instead, what if there were a "map" of the multiple factors that research tells us determine reading ability? And what if teachers were able to use that map to select tests that would help identify students' strengths and weaknesses in reading? And once they had collected that information, what if they could choose instructional materials, strategies, and settings to sharpen the child's reading strengths and address the weaknesses? Wouldn't a teacher, then, be able to use the most appropriate method based on the child's needs rather than on the method of his or her teacher training program?

These are questions SEDL researchers asked a little more than a year ago. And in the year since the NRC report was released, they have been working with teachers in Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas to arrive at some of the answers. Tested with partners at schools in the region, SEDL's approach combines application of reading research with development of tools and delivery of teacher professional development to help teachers understand the research so they can make instructional decisions based on that understanding.

The lead story, "Ensuring Early Literacy through Coherent Instruction" describes SEDL's Reading Coherence Initiative which provides teachers with a conceptual framework based on cognitive research. Using the framework, elementary teachers will be better able to identify and assess essential reading-related strengths and weaknesses in their students.

During the past year, states in SEDL's Southwestern Region have also taken advantage of the momentum created by the NRC report to develop or refine statewide early literacy initiatives. We highlight states' efforts to create and

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disseminate research-based resources, provide educator professional development, and create policies and resources targeting children who have difficulties learning to read in "Reading Across the Region."

Two SEDL states--New Mexico and Texas--have large populations of Hispanic students. Teaching students who have limited English proficiency to read in English is an area in which many teachers have not received training. In "Cooperative Education--the Key to Bilingual Success?" Las Cruces freelance writer Pamela Porter interviews Dr. Margarita Calderón about the Bilingual Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition program, components of which have proved very successful in the popular Success For All reading program. Porter also provides a summary of the work and success of the New Mexico State University America Reads Challenge Site in "New Mexico State University Is Up to the Challenge."

Jill Slack, coordinator of the Reading Success Network for the Southeast Comprehensive Assistance Center, discusses how the RSN process helps teachers to instruct struggling readers in "The Reading Success Network: Linking Teachers, Building Community."

Finally, as in every SEDLetter, we include research- based information you can use to explore the complex issues related to early literacy and delivery of reading instruction. "Resources for Early Literacy" was compiled by SEDL's Office of Institutional Communications and Policy Services and includes ordering information from the organizations cited there.

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SOUTHWEST EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY

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Ensuring Early Literacy through Coherent Instruction

By Leslie Blair

A New Mexico principal tells the story of an American Indian kindergartner. When shown pictures of four common objects during an assessment of early reading skills, the child described the objects vividly without ever using the names of the objects. That the child was able to do so reflects the powerful oral tradition of his native language, Keres, and his fluency in that language.

Coming from an oral tradition means the child is likely to have received less exposure to print than a child whose primary language is oral and print based; this background is an indicator that he might have difficulty learning to read English. The principal wants to ensure this child's reading success, but also wants the student to maintain and preserve the language of the tribe. His dilemma is one shared with educators across the United States who teach an increasingly diverse student population.

By the time most children begin school, they are linguistically competent like New Mexico kindergartner--they have learned to speak at least one language, have developed a large vocabulary, and have mastered most of the syntax of the language. They can usually tell their life story, make requests and demands, and have learned the power of persuasion (as any mother of a three-year-old can attest). However, this does not ensure a child will learn to read English by the third grade.

"To read by third grade is a common and great goal," says Susan Paynter, SEDL program associate and reading specialist, "but it requires that teachers meet the diverse needs of all children."

Paynter works in SEDL's Reading Coherence Initiative (RCI), a project of SEDL's Program for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning (PITL). The initiative promotes coherent approaches to teaching early literacy in grades K-2 and the prevention of early reading failure. PITL defines "coherence" as a relationship created by a teacher between various parts of the instructional system. Parts of the instructional system include those created externally such as curriculum

benchmarks and mandated state assessments. Other parts of the instructional system may be dependent on teacher choices, such as daily lesson sequences and activities. To create coherent practice, the teacher intentionally brings components together with a focus on student learning.

"Our goal," explains Paynter, "is to come up with processes and tools that help educators create coherent reading instruction, so that when a child enters school, there is a reasonable guarantee of success at the end."

In fact, Paynter observes that although recent research has found a significant relationship between home environment and literacy, instruction can be most important. She says that according to research conducted by Harvard professor Catherine Snow and four colleagues, "Children from low-literate homes need to be in high-literate, positive classrooms for at least three years to encourage development of reading skills." Conversely, a child with good reading skills may end up disliking reading if he or she is in a low-literate classroom environment for two years in a row.

Currently Paynter and two SEDL program specialists, Sebastian Wren and Iliana Alanís, are working on the pilot RCI project at six schools in New Mexico and Texas. Educators at these schools see a disparity in reading achievement among certain populations of students, including students learning English as a second language. The teachers are dedicated to ensuring that all of the students are reading well.

SEDL staff members Iliana Alanis, Sebastian Wren, and Susan Paynter are working with six schools in New Mexico and Texas in the pilot program for the Reading Coherence Initiative.

"These teachers are sincere and very resourceful-they have tried just about everything," says Paynter, "but they are faced with a challenge to accelerate learning so that students don't fall behind."

The initiative integrates four elements for a successful reading program: a conceptual framework, assessment, instruction, and professional development. The teachers receive training on the framework, assessment, and instruction through professional development sessions, study groups, classroom observations, and coaching.

The Framework for Reading Comprehension

The framework SEDL is using in its RCI work (see illustration, below) depicts the knowledge domains that a child must master to successfully learn to read English. The domains and their relationships are derived from cognitive research conducted over the last two decades which have been synthesized into a simple

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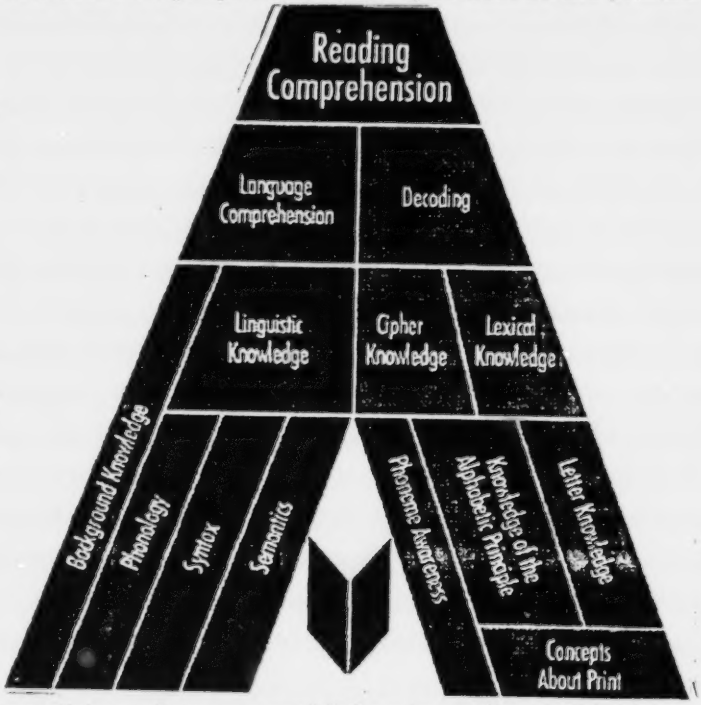
view of reading by Philip Gough and his colleagues at The University of Texas at Austin. At the apex of the framework is reading comprehension-the ability to construct meaning from printed text. Underlying reading comprehension are two equally important elements that research has demonstrated are essential to reading-the ability to understand language and the ability to decode the printed word. Children who have reading difficulties have been shown to have deficits in one or both of these areas. Both language comprehension and decoding are composed of a collection of more fundamental knowledge domains that have been shown to be essential to the successful acquisition of reading, such as having a rich and relevant vocabulary and grasping the alphabetic principle. Cognitive research has made important contributions to early literacy by establishing predictors of success and failure in reading and by reinforcing the need for early intervention for struggling readers.



Program specialist Sebastian Wren elaborates, "Often there wasn't much concern about children who weren't reading with their peers in first grade, because it was assumed that they would 'catch up' if given time. Research tells us that the children who lack basic skills in kindergarten are the same children who are often two years behind their peers in third grade."

Professional Development

The conceptual framework is presented to teachers and discussed during professional development sessions. The framework is vital no matter what type of reading programs or materials have been adopted by a school. SEDL staff other specialists help bridge the gap between the theoretical-the cognitive framework-and instructional practices.

The professional development components are designed around such framework

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topics as oral language, decoding, and reading comprehension. Other activities include interpretations and demonstrations of instructional strategies as well as sessions to help teachers interpret student data collected using reading assessment tools and make sound decisions for instructional approaches based on the data they collect. Paynter emphasizes the process isn't a cookie-cutter approach, but equips teachers to respond to each child individually.

The professional development sessions actively engage the teachers. For example, during one session to help participants understand the cognitive processes involved in learning to read, the teachers were given foreign language texts, primarily French and German. Some of these texts were storybooks, such as translations of the popular "Spot" books; others were nonfiction. The teachers tried to read the texts together and then were asked how they used cognitive skills to figure out what the story was about. Paynter reports the activity was a great way to get into the cognitive components of reading. It also allowed teachers to experience some of the frustrations their students may face in trying to decode unfamiliar text.

Many of the teachers were surprised to learn that it was sometimes easier to decipher the foreign language nonfiction books than the fictional stories.

"Nonfiction books are sometimes easier for children to read, too," says Paynter," because they can draw upon their prior knowledge-which is one of the components of language comprehension in the framework-of a concrete subject."

Assessments and Literacy Profiles

In SEDL's developmental efforts, each participating teacher selects two or three struggling readers as "focus students." Throughout the RCI training, the teachers work with these students intensively. They maintain individual literacy profiles for these students and use the profiles to develop individualized lesson plans. The literacy profile is developed through the skill assessment component of RCI that is ongoing throughout the project. "Teachers who are informed about a child's strengths and needs through meaningful assessment of reading skills can better select instruction to move the child ahead," Paynter observes.

Until recently, there has not been a history of testing young children; generally, teachers in K-3 were left on their own to assess beginning readers and teach as they saw fit. Recent research and the legislative push for standards have changed this practice and more early reading assessments are available. Using such early literacy assessment tools requires teacher training in use and interpretation. Wren explains some of the problems associated with assessment tools in the past.

"Most traditional assessments are not developmentally appropriate for children at this age," he says. "A formal assessment usually assumes that the child is familiar with test-taking procedures and that a score reflects the child's knowledge more than a child's ability to take tests."

Terminology used in the assessment tools can present problems for young learners, too. Paynter reports a recent incident using an assessment to determine a child's rhyming ability. The child knew how to rhyme and recognized words that rhymed but did not understand the term "rhyme." Another problem with assessments for young learners is that very often pictures are used as part of the assessment tool and what is pictured is often a matter of interpretation-one child may call it a ribbon, another child may call it a bow. These examples illustrate why it is so important that assessments be administered in the child's regular classroom environment and why it is important that the child's teacher be the person who administers the assessment-he or she is more aware of what the child actually knows than someone who does not work with the child regularly. Information about each of the child's skills collected through assessments is then compiled in his or her literacy profile.

"Using the literacy profile is similar to piecing a quilt," explains Paynter. "Many interacting and developing skills that contribute to early reading success are measured by various tests and tasks. Schools often have some of this information, but it may be collected in a random way. For the literacy profile, key skills are measured and placed in a relationship to other skills. As the pieces are put together, patterns emerge that indicate areas of strength and need for each child."

The teacher can compare the profile to SEDL's conceptual framework to determine areas in which instruction should be focused.

For instance, the tested skills on one child's profile showed real strength in listening, letter recognition, and oral language, especially rhyming words. On the other hand, the student struggled to understand the boundaries of words, recognize punctuation, and decode very simple words. Noticing the strength of the child's oral language and the ability to create rhyming words, the teacher led the student to produce several rhyming words, then printed them for the student and used these word patterns to teach a common vowel combination that was also in the child's name. The child's ability to decode new words using this spelling pattern was quickly strengthened.

"The teacher used the literacy profile to identify the child's immediate needs and also to gather information about strengths which the child possessed. The teacher used the strengths of the child as a starting point for an efficient and memorable way to present new material to the child," Paynter observes. "By using the literacy profile, the teacher was able to see that the child's own language could be a source of rhyming words to teach decoding. This insight created an experience of success for both teacher and student without the frustration of extensive trial and error techniques."

The literacy profile also provides teachers with a way to measure results, a step that is often left out of the instruction process. Although a teacher may have used many strategies in teaching reading, he or she may not know which strategy was successful with which children. After incorporating a new strategy

into instruction, a teacher can reassess a child's skills, to determine if the strategy was effective with a particular child. The teacher can then decide to move forward in instruction or change instruction to best help a struggling reader.

Part of SEDL's professional development is to help the participating teachers design lesson plans to meet the specific needs of the focus students. By working with the focus students, teachers can explore the connection between teaching strategies, demonstration lessons, and student learning. Also as part of the training, through observations, coaching, and an ongoing professional journal, teachers respond to and reflect on the process of teaching reading using new theory, methods, and activities they have learned during the RCI training. A superintendent who has schools participating in the SEDL initiative says that the follow-up observation and coaching have given his teachers the courage to try new strategies.

SEDL's work at the sites is still in the early stages, but thus far teachers have also found the profiles and assessments helpful. Several teachers were to learn from the assessments that some of their kindergarten students could not blend sounds together to make a common word. For example, given the separate sounds of /s/ /a/ /t/, some of the children could not blend them into the common word "sat." Several of these teachers planned lessons to strengthen the students' skill in blending sounds using word games provided and demonstrated during the professional development sessions.

During another session, teachers used magnetic pieces that represented the different components of the conceptual framework. Each teacher used the pieces to form a hierarchy of the strengths and weaknesses of one of their struggling readers. The teachers compared their hierarchies. Each teacher was able to find other students with problems similar to those of his or her struggling student. Also by comparing the hierarchies, it became apparent that there were areas in which the school needed to examine reading instruction strategies as there were many students with problems in specific areas, suggesting that there may be a mismatch between instruction and student needs in the school's reading program.

Lessons like these can do more than map a child's cognitive readiness for reading-they can help inform instruction and a school's reading program. As Paynter emphasizes, "Because reading is a process, how you teach reading is important."

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Reading Across the Region

By Leslie Blair

Across SEDL's five-state region, state departments of education and state legislators are working to strengthen reading programs, raise student reading achievement, and help struggling readers. The focus on reading during this legislative session is probably due to a combination of factors including the systemic reform movement that has been afoot for nearly a decade, reading research that has been much publicized in the past year, and the current national political climate with its emphasis on education issues and the passage of the Reading Excellence Act. We have come to realize that reading proficiency is the key to high student achievement and the earlier we help struggling readers, the sooner they can attain academic success.

The region appears to be moving in the right direction, but we have a long way to go. Any concentrated attention to reading probably won't result immediately in changes in reading achievement. Efforts to ensure that all children learn to read are long term by nature--it takes time to fully develop the research-based reading programs that the states require or consider. Improving reading achievement will also require ongoing, multi-faceted, and effective professional development-an effort that is often just given lip service, with only minimal resources to support it.

Here is a summary of initiatives and legislation in place or under consideration in Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

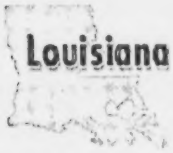
Last May when Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee announced the state's Smart Start initiative for grades K-4, he said, "It's not so much a 'bold, innovative program'-those come and go all the time--as it is a commitment to the commonsense principles we know work." Smart Start aims to increase reading and math achievement at the lower grades to create a strong foundation for academic success.

The initiative includes increased teacher training, training for principals, student assessment, and holding school districts accountable for student achievement.

Smart Start incorporates the curriculum framework developed by the Arkansas Department of Education, and the staff development emphasizes topics related to subject matter content, curriculum alignment with the frameworks, analysis of assessment results, and incorporation of a variety of instructional techniques.

Although Smart Start won't be fully in place until the 1999-2000 school year, professional development training is already underway this year. Teachers and administrators across the state have been receiving training in the use of a balanced literacy approach through the state's Early Literacy Learning in Arkansas (ELLA) for grades K-2, Effective Literacy for Grades 2-4, and Multicultural Reading and Thinking (McRAT) for grades 4-8. This balanced approach recognizes the importance of phonics, word recognition practice, and focused comprehension instruction and attempts to provide the child with both the skills and motivation to become a proficient reader.

For the 1999-2000 school year, five additional reading specialists in Reading/Early Childhood Curriculum will be assigned to the Education Service Cooperatives and three specialists who are now part-time will be increased to full time.



Louisiana students' performance on the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) prompted the 1997 state legislature to appropriate $30 million for a KÐ3 reading and math initiative. The legislation required each "governing authority" to implement at every elementary school a reading program designed to teach students to read on grade level by not later than third grade. The mandate specified that the reading programs should include, but not be limited to, phonics. It also had an accountability component within the first 30 school days of the school year and the last 30 school days of the school year, teachers must report the number of students who are not reading on grade level. At the time, however, the legislature did not indicate that a specific reading assessment be used.

The 1998 legislature appropriated another $20 million for the initiative. Then, in May, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) selected the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) as the assessment to be used to measure the reading level of each child. By summer, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) worked to get staff development for the DRA in place so teachers could begin using the assessment at the start of school. DRA consultants made presentations at each of Louisiana's eight regional education service centers. To help build capacity, LDE invited districts to send one teacher for each 30 first- and second-grade teachers in the district. These teachers, in turn, were able to take what they learned back to their peers.

The BESE also recently relaxed the "minimum minutes per subject per week" policies to allow some flexibility in the amount of time spent on reading

instruction. The board requires that 825 minutes per week be spent on language arts for grades 1-8. Because of the importance of reading, elementary school teachers are able to spend up to 1,050 minutes a week with students who need additional instruction.

Since the training last summer, LDE program manager Avril Font says she and two other staff members have spent a great deal of time going to districts, talking about the assessment, and explaining its purpose. Font notes that many districts are providing extensive professional development for the DRA in addition to that offered by the state. LDE has also prepared a DRA training video that will be sent to each school in the state that has a first-, second-, or third-grade class.

At first many teachers voiced a great deal of concern about the DRA, but the concerns are dwindling as they find out how valuable the assessment is.

"Most teachers are telling us the reading assessment is the most valuable time they spend with their young students. It helps them develop effective instruction and then identifies each student's reading progress. For teachers, there is no greater reward than the knowledge that they are making a difference for their students," says BESE president Glenny Lee Buquet.

New Mexico

New Mexico has put much effort into establishing standards benchmarks for all grade levels in all subject areas-so much so that Education Week recently gave the state an A for its efforts in doing so in its annual "Quality Counts" report on the states. Now the bipartisan push is for accountability, teacher standards, and lowering New Mexico's high dropout rate. Both second-term governor Gary Johnson and Senate president pro tempore Manny Aragon have said education is their priority during the 1999 legislative session. Johnson favors ending social promotion and testing annually at every grade level. He is also a strong proponent of vouchers.

Numerous education bills have been introduced this session; several feature appropriations for reading programs. One bill provides for training and support services for reading recovery programs; another provides money for professional development related to early literacy for teachers in Torrance and Santa Fe counties. Another sweeping bill establishes certification requirements for teachers, requires the teaching of phonics in grades 1-3, and requires students to read on level by third grade with better than 95 percent accuracy. One memorial would require the New Mexico State Department of Education (NMSDE) to encourage phonics instruction; another requests NMSDE study early intervention reading techniques and recommend its findings to the legislature prior to the next legislative session.

As SEDLetter went to press, the State Board of Education favors a combination bill for early childhood education and early literacy that could provide as much as $15 million for early literacy programs that would affect preschoolers and students in K-2. The money would be distributed to all 89 school districts in New Mexico, taking into account the district's literacy rate and the at-risk population served by each district. The legislation has a parent involvement component and provides for teacher training and before and after school literacy programs. It would also give districts the option of expanding kindergarten programs from a half day to a full day.

New Mexico has the Even Start Family Literacy Program in place. Nine school districts currently receive funding for the program at 18 sites. This program is carried out in collaboration with area community colleges and serves young children and their parents. Parents are able to improve their own literacy skills and learn how to work with their children in literacy-rich activities from infancy.

Although there is not currently a professional development program for reading instruction in place, NMSDE is trying to educate teachers regarding reading research. In March, the department is sponsoring a presentation by well-known reading researchers G. Reid Lyon and Louisa C. Moats at the University of New Mexico and are sponsoring a conference strand, "A Multicultural Approach to Literacy in the Primary Grades," at the annual conference of the New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children. Lyons and Moats will also speak during the conference strand.

Ann Trujillo, state director for the Even Start program is hopeful that this legislative session will be fruitful. "Those of us in early childhood education have been saying early literacy is important for years," she says.

Oklahoma's Reading Sufficiency Act took effect July 1, 1998. This act aims to ensure that each child attains the necessary reading skills by completion of third grade. State representative Betty Boyd, one of the bill's sponsors, describes the act as a way to "front-load" with the younger students. She says, "It distresses me that we have so many students graduating from high school with reading problems." By focusing on the younger students, Boyd and other lawmakers hope teachers and parents can catch reading problems early on and that students will be good readers well before high school.

Jan Shafer, director of the Oklahoma State Department of Education's Reading/Literacy division, stresses that the RSA gives districts a framework that focuses on five components of reading instruction--phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, reading fluency, and comprehension. The state will issue a reading report card annually for each school.

Under the act, kindergarten, first-, second-, and third-grade students are to be assessed for reading proficiency using multiple, ongoing assessments. School administrators and teachers decide which assessments to use. If a child is not reading at grade level, a special school reading committee must prepare a reading plan that includes a program of instruction designed to bring the student up to grade level. It should include additional in-school instruction as well as tutorial instruction outside of regular school hours, and the parents are to be involved in the development of the plan. The state will provide up to $150 per first-, second-, or third-grade student for reading assessment and remediation activities.

The professional development component of the RSA, Literacy First, addresses teachers' attitudes and skills in reading assessment and classroom instruction. It has been funded through the end of 1999 and to date more than 4,000 teachers have received training. The five-day training is offered at no cost to the school districts and also includes substitute-teacher pay.

Representative Boyd believes the professional development aspect of the act is critical. She emphasizes that the intention of the act and the associated professional development was not to "point the finger" at teachers and imply that they were doing a bad job teaching reading. "We were saying, 'Let's find something new and exciting' they can take back to the classroom," she reports.

Oklahoma legislators have introduced several bills related to reading this session, including a bill related to teacher competencies that requires preservice teachers to receive training that focuses on the five essential elements of reading instruction. Another bill, which did not pass, mandated districts to retain any K-3 student not reading on grade level by the end of the school year. Accountability is also an issue this legislative session.

In January 1996, when Governor George W. Bush challenged Texans to focus on the most basic of education goals-that every child must learn to read by third grade-nearly one-fourth of third-grade students did not pass reading portion of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Three years later, Texas is well on its way to meeting Bush's challenge: the 1998 TAAS scores reflect that only 14 percent of third-graders who took the test did not pass the reading portion.

Commissioner of Education Mike Moses and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) helped school districts step up to Bush's 1996 challenge with the Texas Reading Initiative. Assistant Commissioner Robin Gilchrist remembers Moses asking, "What is the most fundamental thing we can do?"

The answer was to provide good information and resources to schools and districts and allow them to make decisions about their reading programs. Like Oklahoma, Texas is providing structure for reading programs, but allowing local districts and schools to make the decisions regarding assessment, instruction, and remediation.

At the heart of the Texas Reading Initiative are several components: increasing teachers' knowledge of their students' reading skills in KÐ3 through assessment; providing research-based information to educators through two documents, Good Practice: Implications for Reading Instruction and Beginning Reading Instruction: Components and Features of a Research-Based Reading Program; professional development; and parent involvement.

Before the initiative was established, the state legislature had already begun the movement to increase early reading assessment. In 1996, the 75th Legislature mandated that by the 1998-99 school year K-2 students should be administered an early reading skills and comprehension assessment. TEA staff enlisted the help of university researchers to review 141 assessment tools. In May 1998, TEA released a list of 11 suitable early reading assessment instruments, including the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), a criterion-referenced test for grades K-2 that the agency developed in collaboration with the Center for Academic Reading Skills at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.

The TPRI assesses different skills according to grade level. For example, the kindergarten level evaluates listening comprehension, book and print awareness, phonemic awareness, and graphophonemic knowledge. The second-grade level measures reading comprehension and graphophonemic knowledge, word reading ability, and accuracy. Although teachers and schools may use any assessment tool, state monies may be used only for the 11 tools listed. According to Gilchrist, TEA estimates that about 80 percent of the schools are using the TPRI.

Although no professional development is mandated under the initiative, TEA has teamed with the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts at The University of Texas at Austin and the 20 Texas regional education service centers to provide professional development materials and training. The training materials cover a broad range of reading-related topics including early literacy in Spanish, word analysis, phonological awareness, and reading fluency. The training guides include overheads, handouts, and activities for staff developers to use in instructing teachers. Additionally, at each of the 20 regional educational service centers in the state, a reading liaison provides information and training to teachers. TEA has also identified 13 "spotlight reading schools" across the state to showcase good reading practices. The spotlight schools provide teachers with sample reading activities.

Another component in the Texas Reading Initiative is the Texas Reading Academies Grant Program. In August 1998, 37 grants, ranging in size from $72,036 to $547,871,were awarded through the program to 31 school districts

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and one regional service center. Approximately 25 more grants will be awarded this spring. The one-year grants fund projects that focus on the prevention of reading failure and intervention activities. Applicants are encouraged to develop "academy-type" reading laboratories for students and to create reading programs based on research.

Recently Texas "raised the bar" for reading. This spring, more students than ever will take the TAAS tests, as it is now more difficult for districts to exclude special education students from testing. Also in 1999, districts will be accountable for students taking the TAAS in Spanish. Under pending legislation (the bill was passed by the Senate unanimously in February), third graders who do not pass the reading portion of the TAAS test would be retained. However, the legislation, which is now being considered by the House, contains a provision for multiple opportunities to pass the TAAS and for accelerated, research-based instruction for students reading below level. If passed, it will also provide for parents of kindergarten and first- and second-grade students to be notified if their child is below grade level in reading development or comprehension.

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New Mexico State University is Up to the Challenge

By Pamela Porter

"Instead of planting apple seeds, I plant books," says Nick Dyorich, a co-coordinator for New Mexico State University's America Reads Challenge. Even more important, Dyorich plants tutors, who work one-on-one with children and adults struggling to learn to read throughout southern New Mexico communities.

Initiated in the fall of 1997, NMSU's College of Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and the Office of Financial Aid have been working together to implement this literacy project, which employs Federal Work Study (FWS) students and volunteers of all ages. Joining the core of 30 federally paid students, who work 15-20 hours per week, are students from NMSU's Multicultural Education, Elementary Literacy and Early Childhood Literacy courses and community volunteers. All tutors receive training and material resources from the NMSU ARC Tutoring Program, which has developed three training manuals. Based on the latest in research findings as well as observations from tutors and clients, the manuals cover early childhood literacy, school literacy, and adult literacy.

"Dr. Stan Lopez has been the godfather of the program. He got it off the ground and kept it alive," Dyorich explains. But Lopez is also concerned about the survival of this important program, with or without continued funding, Dyorich notes. That concern led Lopez to approach regional high schools to participate in cross-age tutoring-enlisting the help of high school students to tutor elementary readers.

"If we ever go away," says Lopez, referring to the NMSU America Reads Challenge model, "what we want to do is have something in place that goes on and on. We'd like to see it become part of the high school culture." He points out that our society does not value high school students enough, but they definitely have something to offer. "The little kids look up to them and they become involved-the older students become their heroes." Self-

AmericaReads CHALLENGE

SEDL, along with the other nine regional labs, participated in the America Reads Challenge (ARC) program which used federal work-study students to tutor struggling readers. SEDL provided workshop training for tutors across the region and funded five Challenge sites

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esteem increases for tutors and their young students, Lopez says, and drop-out rates decrease. Although there tends to be "initial discomfort" in using the high school students as tutors, the elementary schools in Las Cruces and Anthony with the cross-age tutoring programs are eager for more high-school volunteers.

located at Arkansas State University, New Orleans Reads!, New Mexico State University, Oklahoma City University, and Southwest Texas State University

Tutors work with struggling readers in a number of literacy enrichment activities that incorporate oral and written language. Of course the tutors read to and the children and discuss the material they read, but they also spend time just talking to the children to determine their language capabilities and helping the young readers express themselves in speech. They write for and with the children, composing cards, lists, and stories and writing in diaries. The young readers spend time drawing and scribbling to help overcome their fear of writing, and they make personal alphabet books and piece together letter puzzles.

According to Dyorich, the model was designed to reach 200 students needing tutoring at Doña Ana Branch Community College, the NMSU childhood development programs, Las Cruces Public Schools, and Gadsden Independent School District. The program quickly exceeded its goal of reaching 200 students in need of tutoring. The program now has approximately 500 tutors and more than double that number of students are being tutored. Dyorich and Lopez hope to create a network of satellite sites to reach even more youngsters and adults in Even Start, Head Start, public school, and adult literacy programs because the need is so great in border communities.

Dyorich regularly speaks to service clubs and community groups in search of more volunteers and seeks business donations for books and school supplies. FWS students and volunteers are trained by ARC coordinators, who also monitor their performance through field observations, tutor feedback, client-tutee feedback, and faculty input. Tutors are instructed in ways to "break the ice" with their young students, who give tutors tours of their schools and are encouraged to share their reading preferences and interests. "For many, the tutor becomes a constant for the child in an inconsistent life," he observes.

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Cooperative Education — The Key to Bilingual Success?

By Pamela Porter

When Margarita Calderón, Ph.D., of Johns Hopkins University and Howard University's Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk, tested the Bilingual Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (BCIRC) model she developed, she thoroughly expected students to succeed in making the transition from their native Spanish to English. And while students in the program consistently outperformed their peers on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), there was another exciting outcome: teachers involved in the experiment also flourished. That's probably due in large part to the philosophy of cooperation-the driving force behind the model-that also extends to educators in BCIRC's comprehensive listening, speaking, reading, and writing program. Calderón notes that the majority of the teachers involved in an Ysleta Independent School District 1988-93 study are now in leadership positions or are pursuing advanced degrees.

Rosa Lujan, who has accomplished both, currently works as bilingual education specialist for the YISD. She is enthusiastic about this method of teaching because of the positive experiences she had as a teacher using the model in second- and sixth-grade classes.

"It's amazing how creative the children can be," Lujan says, as she gives examples of children at risk who have "blossomed" and are now doing well in high school or are attending college. "But the program made for more creative teachers, too-it challenged you to look at what you're doing in a community of teachers working together."

Calderón believes that one of the factors that contributed to the success of the Ysleta experiment is this teachers' learning communities (TLC) component. "TLCs took apart, changed the model, and adapted it to student needs. Teachers taught one another and would look at what emerged," she observes. "In this way, we were constantly taking the model, massaging it, until it became a more powerful teaching tool."

Based on the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) model developed by researchers at Johns Hopkins University, this bilingual version also incorporates innovative transitional and English as a second language (ESL)

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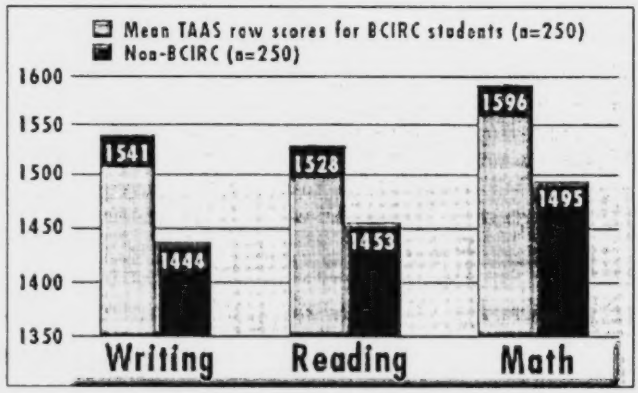
strategies that are effective in teaching reading and writing in both first and second languages (see "BCIRC Strategies,"). The curriculum is based on a 90-minute daily cycle of activities. According to Calderón, comprehension and writing skills are learned through teacher-directed, cooperative, and individual activities. Students are assigned to four-member, heterogeneous learning teams and work collectively to help each other learn academic material. A book club component promotes student-generated activities, and parents are encouraged to read with their children each night.

"Very definitely, it works," Calderón says of the BCIRC model. "Students learn English faster and more effectively. And they learn additional skills--study, collaborative, and critical thinking skills. BCIRC is a great vehicle for teaching languages," she adds. She points to statistics gathered during the Ysleta study that back up this claim and shows graphs illustrating that students enrolled in the BCIRC classes surpass those in control classes on all skills--including math--on both the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and the Norm-referenced Assessment Program for Texas (NAPT).



Differences between Experimental and Control Classrooms Based on TAAS Scores, 1991-92 School Year

Calderón explains that the BCIRC method of teaching monolingual students a second language has become part of a larger program currently used in the El Paso Independent School District that reaches students in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade--Success For All. Four schools in El Paso, along with nearby Hueco and Socorro campuses, are incorporating SFA techniques and join the 1,200 schools in the United States that have embraced the comprehensive schoolwide restructuring program.

Esther Natera, regional instructional facilitator for

"I'm sold on the strategies they use-the focus, the processes-because I see the benefits for the kids," says Esther Natera, regional instructional facilitator for EPISD's Bilingual/ESL program. She believes the BCIRC, CIRC, and SFA programs are successful because children become thoroughly engaged in activities that reinforce the reading process long enough to be remembered. During site visits to the SFA schools, she sees that there are other ways students with limited vocabulary skills can express themselves and develop cognitively. Natera also appreciates the continuous monitoring of the reading process, which allows students to get the intervention they need before problems arise.

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EPISD's Bilingual/ESL program.

Natera points out, however, that cooperative learning is "a very, very structured program and could be overwhelming for teachers." But when used correctly, the teacher assumes the facilitator role and the percentage of student talk increases. "And for second language learners, what is important is the language," she stresses.

Saul Lopez, a friend and colleague of Calderón's who is administrator for five middle schools in Juárez, México, has noticed a definite improvement in student skill levels since he began using BCIRC strategies in his schools two years ago. He calls the model "a wonderful tool to implement the new theories of educational reform in México" and shares his experiences with Calderón.

He discovered that by putting parents in teams, they become more effective and dedicated in the home reading and discussion portion of the program. He has also noticed that students have more confidence when speaking in front of groups and that their behavior improves. "So we're learning together," Calderón explains. "This is true cooperative learning--on a binational level."

Lopez and Calderón agree that they have experienced many of the same successes and failures, even though Mexican teachers are mandated to use official textbooks and regularly have up to 50 students in their classrooms. The educators point out that without sufficient time devoted to this process, limited staff development or no follow-up, BCIRC becomes less effective.

Saul Lopez, school administrator in Juárez, México and Margarita Calderón at work in Calderón's El Paso office.

As students work together to master reading and writing skills in two languages, they also learn cooperation and "people skills" that are invaluable. They become higher-order thinkers and become less afraid of failure. When teachers are able to use this cooperative learning approach to education, students grow--and so do the teachers.

Pamela Porter is a freelance writer and photographer who lives in Las Cruces, NM. She is a frequent contributor to New Mexico Magazine.

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BCIRC Strategies

Strategies used in the Bilingual Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition model include a variety of interactive activities that build upon reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking skills in two languages. The program also allows for team building as the students work with peers and share background knowledge. The sequential activities that take place before, during, and after reading are described below.

Building Background and Vocabulary

Teachers survey reading selections to identify content and language that might be unfamiliar to students, then with and for students, they develop semantic maps that become word banks for use in reading, writing, and discussion.

Making Predictions

After a teacher models how to make and confirm predictions, students work with team members to examine the title and illustrations of a story to predict elements of the story, which are shared with the entire class.

Reading a Selection

Students follow the text of the story as the teacher reads aloud and "whisper read" during the next reading.

Partner Reading

Sitting in pairs, ear to ear, students first take turns reading aloud alternating sentences. As time progresses, confidence builds and students read alternate paragraphs. They help each other with pronunciation and comprehension before reading the material silently on their own.

Treasure Hunt: Story

Reading partners discuss the answers to Treasure Hunt questions on story grammar, then work in teams of four to collectively answer questions from the teacher. Students compete against other teams and are called on randomly, so they make sure all group members know the material.

Story Mapping Comprehension

Next, each team creates a story map--a visual aid that organizes story elements such as the main idea, events, problems and conclusion of the story.

Students retell the story to their partners, who evaluate them, then the pairs discuss what they like about the story. Students also recite their stories before the class and for parents at home.

Story-Related Writing

In teams of two or four, students work to develop important elements of writing--character and plot development and the sequencing of events.

Words Out Loud and Spelling

Students help each other master new words and use them in meaningful sentences.

Partner Checking

Partners, who assess whether tasks have been completed, verify each other's progress on a Student Assessment Form, which tracks assignments.

Meaningful Sentences

The meanings of several selected words are discussed and teams "write and polish" a meaningful sentence that is displayed on the wall. Soon, students create meaningful sentences in pairs and then individually.

Tests

After three class periods, students are tested on their grasp of the story and write meaningful sentences. Test scores and evaluations determine team scores while tracking individual progress.

Direct Instruction in Reading Comprehension

Comprehension skills such as identifying main ideas, drawing conclusions and comparing/ contrasting is provided by the teacher throughout the lesson cycle; students practice these skills together before taking individual quizzes.

Writing Workshops

During a series of mini-lessons, students learn and practice techniques on how to complete writing assignments.

Independent Reading

Students are asked to select a book and read it at least 20 minutes each evening, while parents participate in discussion about the material and verify that students have devoted the required amount of time to reading. Students, who turn in book reports and completed forms, earn points for their team.

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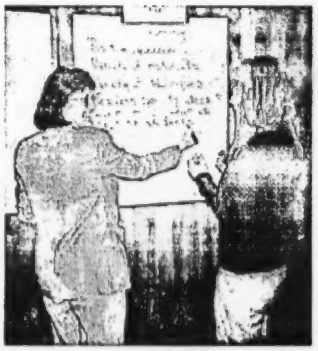
The Reading Success Network: Linking Teachers, Building Community

By Jill Slack

One of the most compelling findings from recent reading research is that more students fail to learn to read by the end of third grade than many people imagine. Indeed, well over one-third (38 percent) of the nation's fourth graders scored below the basic level on the reading portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 1998. This failure of a substantial number of students to learn to read during the first three years of school is a national problem--one that confronts every community and every school in the country.



Jefferson Parish master teachers Arlene Malloy and Londa Foster participate in a SECAC-sponsored Reading Success Network training session.

SECAC is helping teachers in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi tackle this problem by engaging them in the principles and practices of the Reading Success Network (RSN).

"The RSN is a collaborative effort by the fifteen comprehensive centers to improve the reading instruction and enhance the reading skills of K-3 students, especially those who are disadvantaged and at risk" says Hai Tran, SECAC director. "Each comprehensive center has the flexibility to adapt the RSN model to meet the unique needs of its region."

Addressing the national goal to have every student read independently and well by the end of third grade, the SECAC Reading Success Network is a professional development initiative to train experienced reading teachers to become reading coaches for K-3 classroom teachers.

Tran notes, "The basic plan of the network is to start small with only a few schools in each state, provide intensive training and support for these pilot schools, and then scale up." Schools with a high concentration of students with limited proficiency in English are encouraged to join the network since the RSN model can be replicated in settings with diverse characteristics.

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To date the center has developed and provided RSN training and support for more than 50 reading coaches in nine elementary schools in Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana and plans to extend the training to Arkansas and Mississippi this spring.

RSN Is a Process, Not a Program

One of the most important concepts of the Reading Success Network is that it is not a prescriptive program, but rather a process that can be implemented with almost any reading program a school has in place. "Many people think RSN is 'just another program' and they become apprehensive," says Debbie LaCaze, program specialist for the Louisiana K-3 Reading Initiative. "Once they hear it is a process and learn more about it, they begin to view RSN as a structure that will help them reach their benchmark goals in reading."

The network supports classroom teachers' efforts to provide powerful reading instruction through peer coaching, use of reading assessment tools, and data collection and analysis to inform instruction and determine appropriate intervention strategies.

The Reading Success Network (RSN) is sponsored by the Southeast Comprehensive Assistance Center (SECAC), one of 15 regional technical assistance centers funded nationally by the Improving America's Schools Act. SECAC is operated by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in partnership with Texas A&M UniversityÐ Kingsville and American Indian Research and Development, Inc. SECAC serves the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi by providing teachers with information, professional development, and resources. RSN is similar to SEDL's Reading Coherence Initiative in that it draws on research in reading, professional development, and the use of reading assessments to help teachers provide the best instruction for each reader.

The peer coaching strategies give participants information on various coaching models and opportunities to develop their facilitative leadership skills. Coaches learn about the critical attributes of the expert, team, and cognitive coaching models, but most of the emphasis is on the study team model promoted by Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers. The reading coaches discover how study teams enhance staff development efforts and offer support for teachers implementing new strategies. In addition, the coaches participate in simulated study teams throughout the training so they can experience the process firsthand and practice their leadership skills.

"On the surface, the peer coaching study team model appears simple to implement, but it's not" says Rachele Savory, RSN reading coach and teacher at Rosenwald Elementary School in New Orleans. "It's a complex innovation because it requires big changes in relationships among teachers and between teachers and administrators." Peer coaching study teams offer teachers the opportunity to develop greater faculty cohesion and focus; teachers, in turn, facilitate skillful shared decision making.

The reading coaches also learn

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Teacher Javetta Brogan, reading facilitator Adrienne Dowden, and reading coach Arment Guillaume work during a Reading Success Network training session. All three women are from New Orleans Public Schools.

about a variety of diagnostic assessment tools that cover different aspects of reading, from phonemic awareness to comprehension. These assessment instruments are quick to administer, easy to score, and provide both measurable or quantitative data and observational or qualitative data. The Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation, Retelling, High Frequency Reading List, and the Developmental Spelling Test are among the most common assessment tools the coaches use during training. Other instruments may include informal reading inventories and formal assessments promoted by individual states.

The coaches practice administering several reading assessments and collect and analyze the data to determine what the results are saying about the students. They use the data to discuss how to meet the instructional needs of the students. All the while, emphasis is placed on providing a balanced reading approach that includes building phonological awareness along with the reading of meaningful and engaging texts.

RSN Coaches Facilitate Change

When the reading coaches take the RSN components back to the teachers, they act as leaders of the study teams by assisting classroom teachers with identifying appropriate assessment tools to monitor each student's progress in reading and writing. They provide demonstrations on how to administer the assessments and help teachers practice using the instruments. The coaches also show teachers how to use assessment data to identify the needs of their low-performing readers and to improve their instruction of these students.

Belinda Biscoe, Region VII Comprehensive Center director at the University of Oklahoma, says the RSN process "offers schools something new and different that can help teachers make an impact that is both immediate and sustained."

Often teachers who haven't been communicating immediately begin talking to each other and collaborating on teaching activities. "Teaching is rooted in isolation; RSN provides the mechanism for them to come together to make informed decisions," explains Krista Underwood, reading program manager at the Arkansas Department of Education.

The sustained impact stems from the program's ongoing nature.

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The RSN process and training have received district and community support and attention. Following an orientation meeting in Louisiana, Ramona Mitchell, associate director of reading for New Orleans Public Schools, and her colleagues immediately signed up to participate in the RSN. They say the process was what they were looking for "to improve the reading instruction and achievement of K-3 students."

Glenda Rawls, Title I Department, Fulton County, Georgia, has played an active role by helping schools find the time to meet and by guiding the direction of two RSN pilot sites. Across the state line in Phenix City, Alabama, a local news crew videotaped the RSN orientation for the school district's six elementary schools. In an interview, Assistant Superintendent Cordelia Moffet explained that RSN is a promising approach because it offers "a collaborative strategy that builds teachers' knowledge of how to provide a balanced reading approach to help all students become successful readers."

RSN Schools Are Unique

The way the network develops and the ways the reading coaches organize their work with classroom teachers may vary from state to state, district to district, or even school to school due to the diverse needs and goals of each entity. "One of the most important lessons we learned is to align the RSN components to the state and district reading initiatives," says Tran. This factor substantially contributed to the success of network activities in all three states where the SECAC RSN is currently being implemented. The reading coaches like the way the process complements their reading initiatives. "I am pleased to see the Reading Success Network tailored to meet our district's specific needs and goals," says Rawls. "RSN is helping us help our students experience reading success at a young age."

Jill Slack, a program specialist at SECAC, is the RSN coordinator.

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Resources for Improving Children's Ability to Read

Educators, policy makers, parents, and caregivers agree that reading is critical for success in life and that a combination of methods will help early readers develop the awareness, comprehension, and fluency to read. The network of regional educational laboratories, R&D centers, the America Reads Challenge program, and other education research organizations produce books, training modules, videos and other products that can help improve the teaching of reading and literacy education in your school or community.

PUBLICATIONS

Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children

In March 1998, the National Research Council (NRC) issued this report, which resolved some debates about the best method for teaching reading. The report paints an integrated picture of how reading develops in children, how its development can be promoted, and makes recommendations about literacy instruction in first through third grades, literacy development in preschool and kindergarten, education and professional development for literacy instructors, methods for teaching reading to speakers of other languages, resources to meet children's needs, and ways to address the needs of children with persistent reading difficulties.

Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children is available for $39.95 from the

National Academy Press
2101 Constitution Avenue NW Lockbox 285
Washington, DC 20055
(800) 624-6242

It may also be read online at http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/prdyc/

Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success

Drawing on the work of its groundbreaking March 1998 report, the National Research Council also produced this practical guide. Aimed at parents, teachers, and other child care providers, it offers specific activities and tools for helping children become successful readers. It addresses such key questions as, What are the key elements all children need to become good readers? What can parents and caregivers provide all children so they are prepared for reading instruction by the time they enter school? What should you say to state and local policy makers who influence early reading instruction? What concepts about language and literacy should be included in beginning reading instruction? How can we prevent reading difficulties, starting with infants and continuing into the early grades? Starting Out Right includes accomplishment checklists for preschool through third grade, a variety of activities for children, a list of recommended children's books, a guide to software and CD-ROMs, and a list of Internet resources.

Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success is offered for $14.95 by

The National Academy Press
2101 Constitution Avenue NW
Lockbox 285
Washington, DC 20055
(800) 624-6242

or visit the National Academy Press Web Bookstore at
http://www.nap.edu/bookstore/isbn/0309064104.html

Every Child Reading: An Action Plan

This report was published in June 1998 by The Learning First Alliance, a consortium of 12 leading national education associations. It provides a concise, easy-to-read outline of research and best practices in reading. While an action plan offers many techniques and reforms, it emphasizes that piecemeal reforms are unlikely to work on their own. Rather, it is the appropriate combination of these methods and techniques that can significantly increase children's reading success. The research is summarized in the following sections: prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, beginning reading programs, second grade and beyond, older nonreaders, and English language learners. The paper concludes with an action plan for teaching every child to read. Every Child Reading: An Action Plan is available for $2.00 per copy (minimum 5 copies) from

The American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001

The entire report can also be downloaded free of charge at
http://www.learningfirst.org/publications.html

Building on the Best — Learning from What Works:
Seven Promising Reading and English Language Arts Programs

Published by the American Federation of Teachers in January 1998, Seven Promising Reading and English Language Arts Programs describes these programs: Cooperative Integrated Reading and Comprehension (CIRC), Direct Instruction (DI), Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction (ECRI), Junior Great Books (JGB), Multicultural Reading and Thinking (McRAT), Open Court Collections for Young Scholars (OC), and Success for All (SFA). Each program profile starts with an overview including grades covered, materials needed, professional development, and cost. More detail is also given in descriptions, main features, results, and case studies of each program. A list of resources is included for all programs.

Building on the Best--Learning from What Works: Seven Promising Reading and English Language Arts Programs is available in full text on the Web at: http://www.aft.org/edissues/whatworks/seven/index.htm

Every Child a Reader Series

The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) has developed an innovative series of six-page pamphlets covering the state of current reading research in such topics as early reading concepts, phonics and word recognition, comprehension, reading engagement, and schoolwide reading programs. Written for teachers and teacher educators, the series gives new teachers access to current research in clear, concise language and practical activities to use in their classrooms. Veteran teachers can use the topics to spark discussions among colleagues during the course of the year; teacher educators can build preservice activities introducing prospective teachers to the research and what works in real classrooms. A companion set of 18 articles selected and reprinted from The Reading Teacher is also available for use with Every Child a Reader.

Every Child a Reader is available from the University of Michigan/ CIERA for $10.00 per set of six pamphlets; boxes of 25 sets are $187.70 per box. Companion sets of articles are $16.00 per set of 18 reprinted articles. In Michigan, add 6 percent sales tax or provide tax exemption number; shipping outside the United States, add $1.00 per copy.

Visit the Web site at http://www.ciera.org/ or contact

Every Child a Reader
CIERA/University of Michigan
610 E. University Avenue
Room 1600 SEB

Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259

WEB SITES

America Reads Web site:
http://www.ed.gov/inits/americareads/index.html

This Web site provides access to valuable publications and resources for use by families and teachers to help children learn to read. Just Add Kids is a resource directory of learning partners, reading sites, and other literacy organizations serving children and their families. Another resource available from the America Reads Web site is the READY*SET*READ Early Childhood Learning Kit. This kit includes an early childhood activity calendar and growth chart. Another useful publication available at this site is Simple Things You Can Do to Help All Children Read Well and Independently by the End of the Third Grade. The America Reads Web site is maintained by the U.S. Department of Education and gives easy access to reports and programs developed by the department.

Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement Web site:
http://www.ciera.org/

The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) develops and disseminates theoretical, empirical, and practical solutions to problems in the learning and teaching of beginning reading. This Web site includes news about CIERA research, online research presentations, a calendar of relevant upcoming events, a collection of printed reports, and a family literacy bibliographic database. The site also includes additional information about CIERA researchers and projects as well as a comprehensive listing of Internet sites devoted to reading, literacy, and education research.

This list of resources was compiled by SEDL Office of Institutional Communication and Policy Services staff members, including information associate James Foster, OICPS director Joyce Pollard, and information specialist Lacy Wood.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

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